

Whom Will Beautiful, Poetic, Mrs. Thomas Marry Next?

**All Fashionable Society (and Broadway)
Much Interested in the Race for the
Brilliant Divorcee's Hand—with Actor John
Barrymore
the Favorite**

NO greater surprise was ever passed on to fashionable society in America by one of its members than the divorce of Mrs. Leonard Thomas—whom Helieu, the great French artist, called the most beautiful woman in the United States, and who is known as the poetess of passion of America's "Aristocracy"—from her pleasant and very rich husband. Both are young. Both have lots of money—Mrs. Thomas was Blanche Oelrichs, a daughter of that immensely wealthy family. Both, on the surface, had loved the same things—the gaiety of Newport, of Paris before the war, of New York. They seemed an ideally matched couple.

Of course, fashionable society watched with much interest and some amazement the steady progress of Mrs. Thomas along the paths of poesy. Her verses were not exactly conventional. And Mr. Thomas, coming from the old Philadelphia family of that name, was supposed to be at least conventional in his literary tastes.

Then after months of secrecy it leaked out that the Thomases had been divorced in Paris, now the international Reno, where wedding rings are cut with enormous facility and dispatch. And now society is bracing itself for a further surprise—greater it hazards than the divorce was to it. Whom will beautiful Mrs. Thomas marry next? In that question lies the coming shock.

Rumors and gossip as to the lucky man have been growing daily thicker. Very interesting is it not only to Fifth avenue and Newport, but to Broadway as well, to find that Mr. John Barrymore is most frequently named as the future custodian of the former Mrs. Thomas's charms, graces and temperament.

In fact, so many and confusing are the reports that a weekly journal devoted to the doings of the "smart folk" published recently in a paragraph the statement that no one actually knew if Mrs. Thomas "calls herself Mrs. Oelrichs Thomas or Mrs. John Barrymore."

If this were so, while it would be the beautiful Mrs. Thomas's first venture into the fields of the theatrical for a husband, it would not be Mr. Barrymore's first venture into the fields of fashion for a wife. It was not long ago that Mrs. Herbert Harman's niece, Katherine Harris, daughter of Mrs. Brady Harris, divorced Mr. Barrymore after having been converted to Catholicism in order to marry him.

And a very curious fact concerning this is that the very famous Ethel Barrymore, instead of taking sides with her brother in the matter, spring still another surprise upon society by engaging her ex-sister-in-law as a member of her supporting company in her play "Declassee!" But whether Mr. Barrymore or some other, those who know Mrs. Thomas believe that she will not again marry into the set to which she was born, but into the to her far more interesting set which she adopted some time before her divorce.

For months the name of Mrs. Thomas has been linked with that of the talented actor whose drafts upon his genius in his production of "Richard III" caused a complete breakdown and sent him away for treatment and rest. At least that was the cause given. But it is no secret that many of Mr. Barrymore's friends lay the blame for his breakdown on anxiety over Mrs. Thomas's affairs. They assert that her temperament, which kept Mr. Thomas on the anxious seat for several years, also had its part in Mr. Barrymore's collapse, for Mrs. Thomas is a very temperamental young woman, and her several years of matrimony increased rather than lessened this fascinating quality.

At all events, Mr. Barrymore's illness began shortly after the Thomas divorce was granted, and Broadway frankly says that if the lady had announced her engagement to the actor he could not be playing Richard.

Mrs. Thomas, whose beauty is of a rare order, possesses also a curiously brilliant mentality. Her divorce revealed that she had never found supreme happiness as a member of the ultra-fashionable class to which she belongs by birth and breeding. Through all these months Mrs. Thomas has kept her own counsel. She has refused to say the word or take the step that would clear the fascinating mystery. Those who know her best say that she is doing perfectly right—that having made one mistake she wants to be sure before taking a second husband. But this does not satisfy either Mr. Barrymore or his numerous supporters. They can see no reason for waiting, now that she has her freedom, and they say that this talk about temperament is all bunk, for Mrs. Thomas is no more temperamental than Barrymore, and therefore she should marry him and be done with it.



Photo by CHARLOTTE FAIRCHILD

Mrs. Thomas in Her Phase as Poetess—with "Artistically Bobbed" Hair and an "Intense" Gown.

But others say that both society and Broadway are unjust to the beautiful divorcee. Her temperament means a great deal to her. When a woman makes a tremendous sacrifice for a possession it is no easy matter for her to surrender that possession, even under the pressure of love.

And despite the present state of affairs, it was a sacrifice for Mrs. Thomas to seek a divorce, for she displaced her family and practically went against her religious faith by so doing.

To paraphrase a popular quotation, "the girl is mother to the woman," and the Blanche Thomas of today is the logical development of the Blanche Oelrichs of yesterday, who delighted in setting all Newport by its ears before and during her marriage.

As a flapper, Blanche, the younger daughter of Charles Oelrichs, was daring and brilliant, and these qualities intensified as she grew older. The year of her debut, when she might have had New York at her feet, her dazzling brunette beauty making her a sensational success, she decided to give up society and go in for writing in a serious way. She started to write a play, but turned to poetry as a means of expressing herself.

Just when her family despaired, an unexpected attack of love interrupted her literary flight. She fell desperately in love with Mr. Leonard Thomas, son of the Charles Thomases, of Philadelphia, and married him before she thought of her temperament. Mrs. Oelrichs was elated; matrimony would surely cure Blanche's poetic and artistic urge. But the honeymoon over, this urge again got in its work, and one day she invited some friends in for tea and read them her latest effort.

They were hardly the verses of a happy wife, and they failed to appeal to her husband. How could they?

"I wake in weariness
And fall asleep in tears.
Tell me, is this life's measure
For all the future years?
For if it is, my dear,
Then I will have no more
Of this deep ache of mine
So deep, so sad, so sore.
Then I will go to meet
The dawn below the sea,
And watch the bubbles rise
That once was breath—of me."



By CHARLES FERRIS

Society, like the average husband, has difficulty in appreciating morbid genius when that genius belongs to the family. It's all right on the stage, but who cares for morbidity at the breakfast table or bedside? When Thomas read these early verses of his wife he made a real, albeit, a gentlemanly, row. Over on First avenue a husband would have clouted friend wife over the head if she had talked such stuff. But Fifth avenue has different manners. Eventually these manners lead to the divorce court, while the sterner manners of First avenue usually lead to peace and reconciliation, when they don't end in the police court.

Following this episode, Mrs. Thomas packed up her children, they were now two, and went to Lakewood, where she sought solace in the pines for her bruised spirit. Again genius broke loose and it was while there that she added further fuel to her husband's fire by writing a series of quatrains. The following one was the most offensive to the husband:

"O come, my soul has lived a thousand nights
Within a moment's dream of you,
So let us build this hour of delights
And give our wrongs the title of our right."

How could anyone live a thousand nights in a moment? According to Thomas no one could, and what did Blanche mean anyway by talking about wrongs and rights? In his opinion, as a husband, he

Mr. John Barrymore in an Emotional Scene, Upon the Stage with His Famous Sister, Ethel Barrymore

—Who Took His First Wife Who Divorced Him Into Her Theatrical Company.

thought he was the one to talk about wrongs and rights, too, for that matter. So the battle was on between temperament and matrimony.

With the coming of Summer there was a wide breach between husband and wife. They took a Newport house, however, although Blanche insisted that she would not entertain in a general way, but devote herself to writing and cultivating her artistic sense.

Life in that secluded villa on the edge of the Cliffs looked peaceful enough on the outside, but what a different tale was told within its walls! Mrs. Thomas locked herself away from the distractions of husband and society and poured her soul out in reams of poetry, always deeply tinged with modern morbidity. Letters and invita-

tions piled up on the tables in the hall and went unopened because genius must not be disturbed; even telegrams were ignored, while Thomas himself spent his days at the Casino, the beach and in the gay homes of his gay friends. And his wife was "at home" to no one.

No one? Well, not exactly, for there were two kindred souls in the colony, the cousins Troubetskoy, Pierre, the sculptor and Paul the painter. Having the artistic temperament in common with the two cousins, Mrs. Thomas liked nothing better than to sit for hours in soul communings with them. Thomas did not object to finding the cousins there when he returned for tea or dinner, but when they appeared for lunch as well he did glower and scold. He complained that this was too much.

seemed as though her temperament was finding its truest, finest outlet. She gave up writing, for, as she explained, she could neither think nor create in the feverish atmosphere, and as she needs tranquillity for the outpourings of her soul, it was better to drop all thoughts of literary work and devote herself to helping win the war.

After the armistice Mrs. Thomas went to Paris, and then word came that she had secured a divorce. Paris has been the happy hunting ground lately for American women seeking divorce and over there the news caused no sensation. But over here it came as a bombshell, for it let loose all the gossip that had been seething under cover for some time, and so we are back at the beginning of our story. Will the temperamental Mrs. Thomas marry John Barrymore?



Mrs. Thomas in Fancy Dress During the Hey-Day of Her Brilliant Social Activities.

But there was worse in store, for by mid-August they began dropping in for breakfast.

One day things came to a show-down when Thomas came downstairs shortly after nine to find the hall table heaped high with unopened mail, and a literary advisor closeted with his wife in the library.

"Breakfast?" murmured the wife, when Thomas banged the door open, "I cannot eat now. I am discussing my new poem on the hidden beauty of the city—New York, I mean. Please run away, dear, and leave us alone."

With a near-murderous expression, friend husband turned away just as a chugging motor stopped at the veranda steps. Out jumped the cousins Troubetskoy, big, overpowering men, physically, and across the veranda they clumped. Thomas, being bred to conventional standards, tried to be polite.

"Mrs. Thomas is engaged, she cannot see you now," he started to explain, but Mrs. Thomas was electrified, and with a swirl of her filmy chiffon draperies she bounded toward the veranda. "Oh, Paul, oh, Pierre, this is heavenly. Do come in. We are reading my new poem and I must have your advice, and, of course, you'll stay for breakfast."

Could any husband stand anything like this? He could not. Without a word Thomas grabbed his Panama from the stand and fled from his messed-up home, a thunderclap in full action. Mrs. Thomas shrugged her slender shoulders, in true melodramatic fashion, her eyes snapped and her bosom heaved under the transparencies of her boudoir gown. "Never mind Len; he danced all night and is a bit groggy this morning." And the literary council went into executive session.

This episode was only one of many similar ones and when the Thomases returned to New York, husband and wife were far apart.

Next the beauty ran the gamut of Orientalism and Bohemianism in all their phases, and in a sudden outburst of Paganism babbled her beautiful brown hair and had her portrait done and photographs taken showing her ultra-modern headpiece. This brought forth another domestic storm and Thomas went to his club for a few days' rest.

With the coming of the war conditions improved somewhat, Mrs. Thomas was drawn into war work and it seemed as though her temperament was finding its truest, finest outlet. She gave up writing, for, as she explained, she could neither think nor create in the feverish atmosphere, and as she needs tranquillity for the outpourings of her soul, it was better to drop all thoughts of literary work and devote herself to helping win the war.